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ABSTRACT

This book focuses on the history and culture of the First Nations of Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba (Canada). An introductory chapter briefly overviews the history of the First Nations, based on evidence found at archaeological sites in the plains and subarctic areas within the three provinces. Although there were many notable differences among the tribes who lived in these areas, there were several common features. For example, the life of the First Nations was centered around hunting and gathering. They also believed that creation was a unity of the created: all plants, animals, and inanimate objects had spirits or souls, and humankind did not hold a privileged place among them. Women were regarded highly and held honored places in both ceremony and story. In addition, women were involved at every level of community life and decision making. Another commonality among tribes was the fur trade. The Natives had been trading among themselves for millennia, but it was the arrival of Europeans with their valuable trade goods that more or less dictated the commercial course of the North American continent for the next 200 years. Chapters cover the following tribes: (1) Assiniboine; (2) Blackfoot Confederacy (Blackfoot, Siksikah, Blood, Peigan, Sarcee, and Gros Ventre); (3) Plains and Woodland Cree; (4) Saulteaux; (5) Dakota; (6) Iroquois; (7) Kootenay; (8) Crow; (9) Shoshoni; (10) Chipewyan; (11) Beaver; (12) Slavey; and (13) Sekani. Details are provided on each tribe's origins, history, culture, language, customs, methods of hunting and preparing food, religious practices, and the effects of European contact and settlement. The book also includes more than 50 archival photographs that depict prominent tribal leaders, as well as ceremonies, clothing, social customs, and other aspects of daily life. Includes a bibliography and a list of books for additional reading. (LP)

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